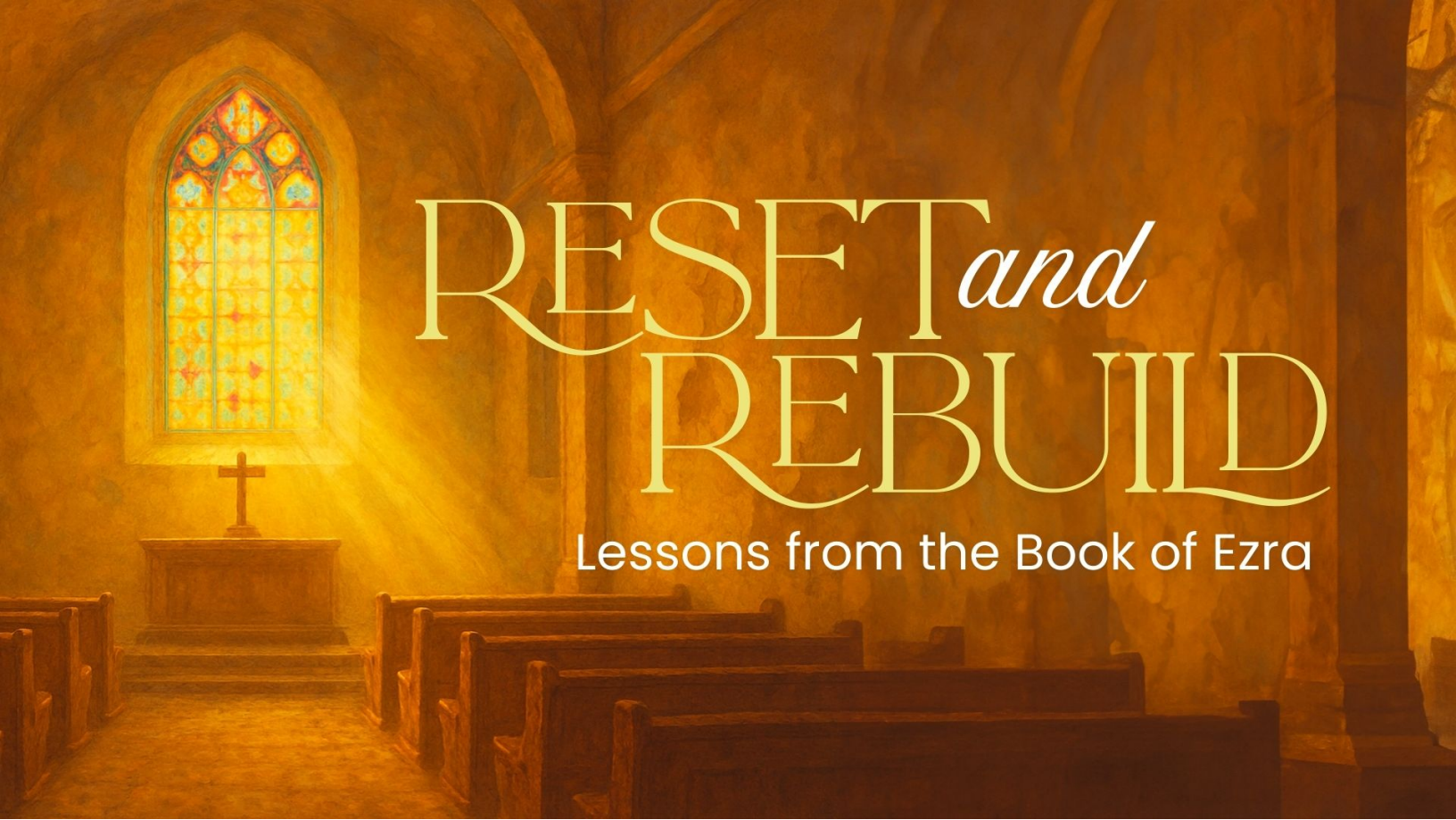




RESET *and* REBUILD

Lessons from the Book of Ezra

A TWELVE-PART SERIES FROM THE BOOK OF EZRA

Sermon Outline Collection

Lessons in returning to God's purpose, rebuilding through opposition, and renewing the heart through repentance and obedience.

Rebuilding the temple

Parts 1-7 follow the journey from exile to restored worship, with an introductory message from Jeremiah and Amos.

Rebuilding the people

Parts 8-12 focus on God's Word, His guiding hand, confession, and the ongoing work of restoration.

Prepared by Kevin Tillman | Resonate Ministries

Concise preaching outlines with Scripture references and brief point summaries. Develop each message for your own congregation.

SERIES GUIDE

The Twelve Messages

Each message retains its original part number. The focus descriptions below provide a quick guide to the series.

01	Returning to God's Purpose	3
	Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7, 10-11; Amos 5:21-24	
02	God Makes a Way	4
	Ezra 1:1-11	
03	Priorities Before the Foundation	5
	Ezra 2:1-70; 3:1-7	
04	Celebrating the Rebuild	6
	Ezra 3:6-13	
05	Resisting Opposition	7
	Ezra 4:1-24	
06	Returning to Unfinished Work	8
	Ezra 5:1-5; selected passages in Haggai and Zechariah	
07	God Completes His Work	9
	Ezra 6:1-22	
08	The Hand of God	10
	Ezra 7:1-28	
09	Faith for the Journey	11
	Ezra 8:1-36	
10	Conviction and Confession	12
	Ezra 9:1-15	
11	Repentance That Takes Action	13
	Ezra 10:1-17	
12	The Cost of Restoration	14
	Ezra 10:18-44	

PART 01 | RETURNING TO GOD'S PURPOSE

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7, 10-11; Amos 5:21-24

Central idea: Spiritual rebuilding begins by returning to God's purpose, living faithfully where He has placed us, and trusting His larger story.

Opening direction: Introduce the reset-button illustration. Trace the background from God's promises to Israel through the temple, spiritual decline, and exile. These teaching movements organize the introductory message.

1. Return to the Original Purpose

Amos 5:21-24

Religious activity cannot replace righteousness and faithfulness to God. A spiritual reset asks whether our worship and ministry still serve the purpose God intended.

2. Live Faithfully in Exile

Jeremiah 29:4-7

The exiles are to build lives, pray, and seek their city's welfare. Apply this as faithful engagement with the surrounding culture without abandoning biblical convictions.

3. Trust God's Larger Story

Jeremiah 29:10-11

God promises restoration to His exiled people. Read the promise in its corporate context and call listeners to find their place in God's purposes rather than asking Him to endorse their own plans.

4. Join the Rebuild

Jeremiah 29:4-7, 10-11

Translate renewed purpose into involvement, outreach, spiritual renewal, and practical care for the church. Begin with prayer and hearts willing to serve.

Closing response: Invite the congregation to pray, renew its commitment to God's mission, and take a part in the work. Offer an invitation to trust Christ and become part of the church family.

Scripture references

Amos 5:21-24; Jeremiah 29:1, 4-7, 10-11. Teaching allusion: John 17:14-18. Historical overview: Abraham, the exodus, the tabernacle, the monarchy, and the exile.

PART 02 | GOD MAKES A WAY

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 1:1-11

Central idea: God keeps His word, stirs hearts, and supplies what is needed for His people to return and rebuild.

Opening direction: Ask whether listeners have ever felt trapped with no way forward. Introduce the return from Babylon as a demonstration of God's faithfulness after a long season of exile.

1. God Stays True to His Word

Ezra 1:1-2; Jeremiah 29:10; Isaiah 45:1-4

The return fulfills God's promise, and Cyrus becomes an instrument in His plan. God's commands and promises remain trustworthy even when fulfillment takes time.

2. God Stirs Hearts

Ezra 1:1, 5

God moves both the king and the returning families to act. Make prayer central to renewal, asking God to awaken willingness and open the way.

3. God Supplies All Needs

Ezra 1:3-4, 6-11

Neighbors contribute resources and Cyrus returns the temple articles. God provides through willing gifts and unexpected channels; His people respond by going, giving, and rebuilding.

Closing response: Encourage those who feel forgotten to bring their discouragement to God. Call the church to pray expectantly and respond when He stirs hearts to act.

Scripture references

Ezra 1:1-11; Leviticus 25:3-4; 26:33-35; Jeremiah 29:10; Isaiah 45:1-4. Restoration images echoed: Joel 2:25; Isaiah 61:3; Ezekiel 37:1-14.

PART 03 | PRIORITIES BEFORE THE FOUNDATION

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 2:1-70; 3:1-7

Central idea: Before the temple foundation is laid, the people establish the spiritual priorities that make rebuilding meaningful.

Opening direction: Picture returning families leaving familiar lives for a ruined city. Their first task is to restore worship and shared obedience before completing a building.

1. The Rebuild Requires Sacrifice

Ezra 2:1-2, 64-70; Luke 14:28-33

Returning requires willingness to leave comfort and give time, energy, and resources. Discipleship recognizes that everything we possess belongs to God.

2. The Rebuild Requires Unity

Ezra 3:1

The people gather with a common purpose. Call a diverse congregation to unite around Christ and His mission rather than personal preferences.

3. The Rebuild Requires Worship

Ezra 3:2-3; Matthew 6:33

They build the altar despite their fear of surrounding peoples. Put worship and obedience first instead of waiting until every uncertainty has been resolved.

4. The Rebuild Requires Remembrance

Ezra 3:4-6

The Feast of Booths recalls God's provision in the wilderness. Remember His past faithfulness as encouragement for present obedience and future trust.

Closing response: Use Ezra 3:6 to emphasize that these priorities precede construction. Invite the church to examine its sacrifice, unity, worship, and remembrance before moving forward.

Scripture references

Ezra 2:1-70; 3:1-7; Luke 14:28-33; Matthew 6:33.

PART 04 | CELEBRATING THE REBUILD

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 3:6-13

Central idea: God's work involves different people and generations. Celebrate present progress while trusting Him with a future that will differ from the past.

Opening direction: The altar is restored and the foundation is being laid. Introduce the mix of contributions and emotions that accompanies a new beginning.

1. God Will Use Outsiders in the Rebuild

Ezra 3:7; Acts 10:15; Isaiah 56:7

Supplies and skilled work come from beyond the returning community. Deal honorably with others and let ordinary interactions become opportunities to reflect God's character.

2. God Will Use Young People in the Rebuild

Ezra 3:8-9

Levites twenty years old and older share responsibility for the work. Give younger people meaningful roles while valuing the experience of older generations.

3. We Need to Take a Praise Break

Ezra 3:10-11

The people praise God when only the foundation is complete. Celebrate real steps forward instead of postponing thanksgiving until the whole project is finished.

4. Not Everyone Will Be Pleased with the Rebuild

Ezra 3:12-13

Joy and weeping sound together as older worshipers remember the former temple. Honor the past and care for those grieving change while continuing the work before you.

Closing response: Ask what voice listeners will contribute to the congregation. Encourage gratitude for God's present work and trust in His future, drawing on Isaiah 43:18-19.

Scripture references

Ezra 3:6-13; Acts 10:15; Isaiah 56:7; 43:18-19. Referenced narratives: Jonah 1:1-3; Acts 10:9-23.

PART 05 | RESISTING OPPOSITION

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 4:1-24

Central idea: Opposition can arrive as deception, fear, or discouragement. God's people must submit to Him, resist compromise, and persevere together.

Opening direction: Recall the excitement of the new foundation, then ask what happens when a good plan meets resistance. Opposition now threatens the rebuilding work.

1. The Enemy Is a Liar

Ezra 4:1-2; 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:12

The adversaries offer help while concealing their opposition. Teach discernment and spiritual alertness, remembering that the deepest struggle is not against people.

2. The Enemy Must Be Resisted

Ezra 4:3; 2 Corinthians 10:5; James 4:7-8

The leaders refuse a compromising partnership. Resist destructive patterns early, test thoughts against Scripture, and submit to God rather than relying on willpower alone.

3. If the Enemy Can't Defeat You He'll Try and Discourage You

Ezra 4:4-5, 24

Fear and pressure bring the work to a standstill. Guard against discouragement growing into discontentment and division; meet difficulties through prayer and honest cooperation.

Closing response: Identify doubt, unhealthy comparison, or delayed obedience that may be undermining faithfulness. Invite prayer, renewed submission to God, and a commitment to work through difficulties together.

Scripture references

Ezra 4:1-24; 1 Peter 5:8; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:5; James 4:7-8. Referenced temptation: Genesis 3:1.

PART 06 | RETURNING TO UNFINISHED WORK

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 5:1-5; selected passages in Haggai and Zechariah

Central idea: God calls His discouraged people back through His Word and strengthens them to resume the work by His Spirit.

Opening direction: Use unfinished projects to picture the abandoned temple. Years of saying “someday” have passed, but God sends Haggai and Zechariah to call the people back.

1. God Stirs His People

Ezra 5:1; Haggai 1:3-8; Zechariah 1:16

Haggai confronts misplaced priorities while Zechariah renews confidence in God’s promise. Receive both the correction and encouragement of God’s Word.

2. God’s Presence Strengthens Our Obedience

Ezra 5:2; Haggai 1:13-14; Zechariah 4:6

The people resume work with the assurance that God is with them. Obedience depends on trust in His presence and Spirit, not simply on resources or determination.

3. God’s Vision Surpasses Our Struggles

Ezra 5:3-5; Haggai 2:3-4, 7-9; Zechariah 4:10

Official questioning returns, but God watches over the builders. Take courage, keep working, and refuse to dismiss small beginnings because they seem unimpressive.

Closing response: Ask what God-given work has been left unfinished. Call listeners to replace “someday” with a concrete step of obedience, depending on the Spirit rather than their own strength.

Scripture references

Ezra 5:1-5; Haggai 1:3-8, 13-14; 2:3-4, 7-9; Zechariah 1:16; 4:6, 10. Faith illustration echoed: Matthew 17:20.

PART 07 | GOD COMPLETES HIS WORK

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 6:1-22

Central idea: God preserves His purposes through opposition and brings the temple work to completion, restoring the people's joy in worship.

Opening direction: Introduce the feeling of being a work in progress. Connect Philippians 1:6 with the builders' long wait to see the temple completed.

1. God Confirms His Word

Ezra 6:1-5

The original decree of Cyrus is located, confirming authorization to rebuild. The discovery reminds the people that delay has not erased the purpose behind their return.

2. God Turns Opposition into Support

Ezra 6:6-12

Darius orders officials to leave the work alone and fund it from royal revenues. God can turn resistance into an unexpected means of provision.

3. God Completes What He Starts

Ezra 6:13-15; Philippians 1:6

The temple is finished as the people obey God's command. Encourage diligence and steady faithfulness even when progress seems slow.

4. God Restores Joy and Worship

Ezra 6:19-22

The completed building serves renewed worship, Passover, and joyful fellowship. Keep relationship with God at the center of every ministry accomplishment.

Closing response: Call listeners to keep doing the next faithful thing. Celebrate God's work while remaining open to the ongoing shaping He does in individuals and the church.

Scripture references

Ezra 6:1-22; Philippians 1:6. Joseph's testimony quoted: Genesis 50:20.

PART 08 | THE HAND OF GOD

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 7:1-28

Central idea: God prepares Ezra through devotion to His Word, provides for his calling, and receives the praise for what is accomplished.

Opening direction: Explain the shift from rebuilding the temple to rebuilding the people. Ezra enters the account as a teacher whose life is marked by the good hand of God.

1. The Hand of God Prepares You Before He Promotes You

Ezra 7:10

Ezra sets his heart to study, practice, and teach God's law. Preserve that order: private attention to Scripture and lived obedience prepare a person to serve others.

2. The Hand of God Provides What You Cannot Produce

Ezra 7:6, 9

Royal support and a successful journey point to God's gracious provision. Serve faithfully while trusting Him to arrange what cannot be achieved through personal influence alone.

3. The Hand of God Points You Back to Praise

Ezra 7:27-28

Ezra blesses God for moving the king's heart and extending mercy. Respond to provision with humility and gratitude rather than taking the credit.

Closing response: Invite listeners to set their hearts on studying and practicing the Word. Use the conductor's hand as a picture of a church following God's direction together and giving Him the glory.

Scripture references

Ezra 7:1-28, especially verses 6, 9-10, 27-28. Illustrative biblical figures: Moses, David, Abraham, Joseph, and Noah.

PART 09 | FAITH FOR THE JOURNEY

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 8:1-36

Central idea: Faith becomes visible through careful preparation, humble prayer, and dependence on God along an uncertain road.

Opening direction: Picture Ezra preparing to lead families and valuable offerings toward Jerusalem. What he has declared about God's care must now shape the way he leads.

1. Faith Prepares Before It Proceeds

Ezra 8:1-20

Ezra pauses, reviews the group, and discovers the need for Levites. Preparation and patient assessment can express obedience just as surely as decisive action.

2. Faith Prays Instead of Panicking

Ezra 8:21-23; 2 Chronicles 7:14

The travelers humble themselves through fasting and earnest prayer. Teach dependence on God as the heart of these practices, rather than an attempt to earn His favor.

3. Faith Provides God's Protection

Ezra 8:31

Ezra credits God's hand with protecting the group from enemies on the journey. Use this testimony to encourage trust in God's presence through uncertainty and danger.

Closing response: Ask where listeners face their own moment of departure or decision. Call them to pause, prepare, and seek God earnestly rather than allowing panic to take control.

Scripture references

Ezra 8:1-36, especially verses 15, 18, 21-23, 31; 2 Chronicles 7:14.

PART 10 | CONVICTION AND CONFESSION

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 9:1-15

Central idea: Renewal reaches beneath outward progress as God confronts compromise and draws His people toward humility and honest confession.

Opening direction: The temple is rebuilt and worship restored, but the report of unfaithfulness exposes a deeper problem. Introduce Ezra's grief as the response of a leader who takes sin seriously.

1. Conviction Begins with Confrontation

Ezra 9:1-4

The report reveals covenant unfaithfulness and involvement in surrounding peoples' idolatrous practices. Let God's Word expose compromise rather than minimizing or renaming it.

2. Brokenness Builds Through Humility

Ezra 9:5-6

Ezra kneels and identifies with the people's guilt. His response models humble intercession instead of blame, defensiveness, or distance.

3. Confession Brings Restoration

Ezra 9:8, 10, 15

Ezra acknowledges both God's grace and the people's disobedience. Confession agrees with God, abandons excuses, and brings failure honestly before His mercy.

Closing response: Invite personal examination before criticism of others. Call listeners to stop hiding, confess honestly, and receive God's gracious call to return to Him.

Scripture references

Ezra 9:1-15, especially verses 1, 3-6, 8, 10, 15.

PART 11 | REPENTANCE THAT TAKES ACTION

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 10:1-17

Central idea: Real repentance moves beyond sorrow into responsibility and concrete obedience, sustained by hope in God's mercy.

Opening direction: Continue from Ezra's prayer: the people gather in grief and conviction. Explain the covenant crisis behind the passage; its focus is unfaithfulness and idolatry, not ethnicity.

1. Repentance Begins with Reverence

Ezra 10:1-2

The gathered people take their sin seriously, yet Shecaniah declares that hope remains. Hold together reverence for God's holiness and confidence in His mercy.

2. Repentance Builds Through Responsibility

Ezra 10:3-9

The people commit to action, and Ezra accepts his responsibility to lead. Genuine repentance owns wrongdoing and follows through even when obedience is costly or uncomfortable.

3. Repentance Brings Renewal

Ezra 10:12-17

The assembly agrees and begins an orderly process of addressing the problem. Move from acknowledging what is right to doing it, allowing confession to produce lasting change.

Closing response: Ask what specific action should follow conviction. Encourage a responsible next step of obedience rather than another emotional promise. Apply the call to forsake sin within the passage's historical context.

Scripture references

Ezra 10:1-17, especially verses 1-6, 9, 12. Context: Ezra 9:1-15.

PART 12 | THE COST OF RESTORATION

Reset and Rebuild

Primary Scripture: Ezra 10:18-44

Central idea: Restoration calls for personal responsibility, the removal of compromise, and steady obedience after the emotional moment has passed.

Opening direction: Introduce the book's quiet ending: a list of names rather than a celebration. Emphasize that renewal is demonstrated in the ordinary decisions that follow confession.

1. Restoration Requires Responsibility

Ezra 10:18-19; Luke 19:8-9

The priests are named first and acknowledge their guilt. As Zacchaeus illustrates, repentance includes taking responsibility and making amends for harm done.

2. Restoration Involves Removal

Ezra 10:20-43; 10:3, 12

The list makes the covenant crisis personal. Preserve the sermon's distinction: this concerns idolatrous compromise in Israel's historical setting and is not permission for divorce today. Apply it to removing sinful habits and compromises.

3. Restoration Results in Renewal

Ezra 10:44

The sobering ending calls for ongoing obedience rather than a passing emotional response. Present renewal as the work of surrender lived out day by day.

Closing response: Conclude the series with a simple invitation: "Yes, Lord." Ask listeners to accept responsibility, surrender what hinders obedience, and remain faithful as God continues His restoring work.

Scripture references

Ezra 10:18-44; 10:3, 12; Luke 19:8-9. Related continuation discussed: the book of Nehemiah.